

# Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF

3

June - July 1999

**YOUNG ADULT  
EUROPEAN MEETING**

**28 December - 1 January**

**Taizé**  
**1999/2000**  
**Warsaw**



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*First reactions after  
the announcement of  
the meeting in Warsaw:  
see page 2*

## EASTER IN TAIZÉ

# To the Wellsprings of Joy

*During the Easter holidays, which lasted for several weeks because of differences from one country to another, 15,000 people from sixty nations took part in the international meetings in Taizé.*

Christ is risen, he is truly risen: on Easter Sunday, this ancient Easter greeting was shared among many people in the most varied languages. Joyfully celebrating Christ's resurrection did not keep us from remaining

very close, in thought and in prayer, to the suffering of the Balkan peoples. On the eve of Easter, Brother Roger said to those present, "These days we are deeply affected by what is happening in Kosovo and in the Balkans. Young people from Macedonia, who were sup-

posed to come to the Milan meeting, were expected in Taizé for Easter but were unable to make the journey. Some of them are doing all they can to welcome refugees at the Kosovo border." A brother had just returned from the Balkans, and shortly after Easter another brother left for Albania.

On successive weeks, two groups of young Orthodox Christians from Bulgaria made the long journey to Taizé, despite the difficulties due to the conflict close to their country. This year, Eastern Christians celebrated the feast of Easter a week after the West. The young Bulgarians sang the prayers commemorating the cross and the burial of Christ on Thursday and Friday. Saturday evening, brothers of the community and young people from many countries joined them for the Orthodox liturgy of the resurrection celebrated in the Romanesque church in the village. "Christ is risen from the dead, by death he conquered death and to those in the grave he brought life": these words, sung



many times during the celebration, expressed the source of the joy burning in the hearts of Orthodox Christians.

A few days earlier, as a sign of solidarity in prayer with the victims of the conflict in Kosovo, a young man sent a candle he had received during a visit to a monastery in Kosovo. That candle was lit during the Bulgarian liturgy, and from it the flame was passed from one to another.

A week before Easter and a week later, the community welcomed two new brothers who received the white garment, one from India and the other from the Czech Republic. And on Easter morning, a young brother from Italy made his life-commitment in the community. Brother Roger said these words to him: "The Lord Christ, in his compassion and his love for you, has chosen you to be in the Church a sign of brotherly love. It is his will that with you brothers you live a parable of community. So, refusing to look back, and joyful with infinite gratitude, never fear to rise to meet the dawn, praising and blessing and singing Christ your Lord."

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## YOUNG ADULT EUROPEAN MEETING IN WARSAW

# Beginning the Year 2000 in Poland

*The week before Easter, Cardinal Glemp in Warsaw and Brother Roger in Taizé announced simultaneously that the 22nd young adult European meeting would be held in Warsaw. This will be the third European meeting in Poland. The two previous ones took place in the south-west of the country, in Wrocław, ten years ago (at the time the Berlin wall fell and Eastern Europe opened up) and then again five years ago. Each time, participants were astonished at the great hospitality of the Polish families. It will be the same in Warsaw, where some 300 parishes are preparing to welcome the young people.*

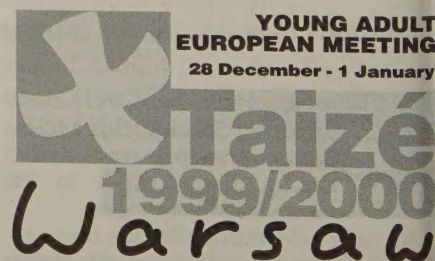
Warsaw is not a well-known city for people of other nations. It became the capital of Poland in the sixteenth century, and many of its monuments date from that time, when the country extended as far as the Black Sea. Warsaw is one of the cities that suffered most from the ravages of the Second World War. After the war, it was the symbol both of reconstruction and of faithfulness to the past: the city centre was rebuilt exactly as it had been before. Then, in the years when Europe was split in half, Warsaw was another symbol: because of the commitment of many Polish people to solidarity and human rights, the hope of freedom and democracy gradually became a reality there. Now that freedom of movement and association has been achieved, some residents of Warsaw point out that other dividing-lines remain, especially those of prejudices and cultural differences. Thanks to their hospitality and their faith rooted in everyday life, the parishes and families of Warsaw will be able to offer encouragement to those who would like to begin the year 2000 by anticipating the reconciliations that are so necessary today.

Meetings of information and preparation, involving hundreds of young people,

have already been held in Warsaw. Participants expressed both their joy and their hopes: the need to live out reconciliation in concrete ways, the desire to be open to those who are far from the Church, the wish better to discover and to celebrate the inner gifts that each person has received.

Young people from one parish summed up their hopes: "When we see the images of war and deportation so close to us, in the South of Europe, we want to profit from this opportunity to live out a powerful sign of reconciliation. We are close to the great Slavic nations, but our culture is rooted more in the West. The meeting is an invitation to search still more passionately how to welcome each person well, so that everyone can feel at home with us. In Poland we have this proverb: 'Guest in the house, God in the house.' We will try to give the best of ourselves, and we know that our visitors will allow us to share their hopes, too. Many traces of the destruction of war remain in our city. Every meeting with people from other countries helps us to understand that a new way forward with our neighbours is now possible. Although the tradition of hospitality is strong here, it will be a challenge for us to welcome all the participants in families. We see this as an

opportunity for our families to rediscover that essential value which is trust. It is true that our parishes are large, and many people go to church, but we sometimes forget to go towards those who are far from the church as a result of the new rhythm of life that destabilizes families. Our city is changing quickly; skyscrapers are springing up everywhere. How can we remember that the essential values are not found in the search to make money as quickly as possible?"





# "I keep the Lord ever in my sight"

Icons illuminated day and night can turn a church into a home where God always welcomes us. They are not just decorations. The following lines would like to give some guidelines to those who are not familiar with the Eastern tradition of praying with icons.

A place of prayer where there are icons and where our eyes encounter the gaze of Christ reproduces in its own way the scene described in the letter to the Hebrews: "Surrounded as we are by an immense cloud of witnesses (...) we fix our eyes on Jesus" (Heb 12,1-2). And a little further on: "You have come (...) to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem where millions of angels have gathered for the festival" (v.22). Prayer with icons is a participation in the "festival" of God's Kingdom. The beauty of colours, the candles and the icons lead our imagination, so often distracted and scattered, back to the joy of that festival.

An objection to the presence of icons comes from the Old Testament where we read: "You shall not make any carved image" (Ex 20,4). This commandment forbids sculptured idols or images that are supposed to represent God. It does not refer to art in general, nor to sacred art in particular. In the very centre of the Temple of Jerusalem, two "cherubim"—golden statues representing heavenly beings—defined an empty space, the symbolic locus of the presence of God, who cannot be represented in any way (Ex 25,17-22).

Human hands cannot create an image of God. But God himself formed his image by creating human beings in his image and likeness" (Gen 1,26-27). And by the coming of Jesus, the promise contained in the creation of humanity in God's image is fulfilled. Christ said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14,9).

In his humanity, Christ is the perfect image of God.

"Icons are the faithful witness that the Word came in human likeness" (Theodore the Studite, ninth century). The Incarnation is the main foundation of the tradition of icons. "Painted images are in accordance with the Gospel stories; they are useful to make the Incarnation of the Word of God more believable, real and not fictional" (seventh ecumenical council, in 787, at Nicaea). Christ's resurrection did not

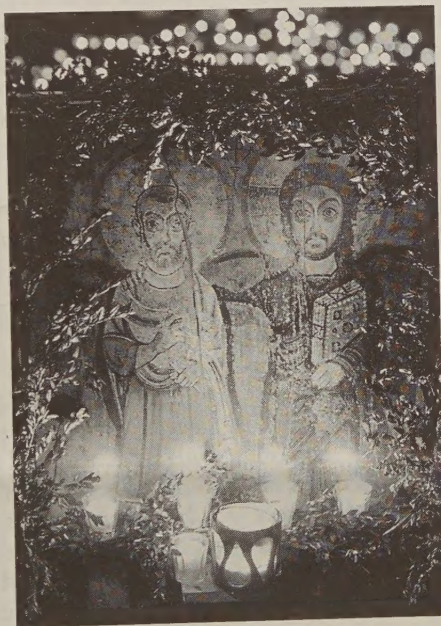
late. In that man, God became visible to our eyes.

When we look at icons, we realize at once that they are not realistic. Unlike illustrations, they are not interested in historical details. Does this contradict their function of making the Incarnation more certain? No, because in this way too they are like the Gospels, which are not biographies but testimonies to Christ: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory" (John 1,14). Icons do not show Christ like a photograph that would have captured his personality. They give us a glimpse of his secret life in God, which the three disciples recognized on the Mount of the Transfiguration.

The Book of Revelation helps us understand what is characteristic of icons. Through "a door opened in heaven" (Rev 4,1), John saw the Risen Christ, the holy witnesses to Christ and the entire universe in adoration. Frescoes, icons and candles reproduce in forms and in colours the vision he had. An icon is a kind of door or window open on the coming Kingdom of God.

The origin of the icon which in Taizé we call "the icon of friendship" could also be a vision from the Book of Revelation. Its written version is this: "Christ placed his right hand on me and said: Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, the Living One; I was dead, and now I am alive for ever and ever" (Rev 1,17-18). The icon reproduced on this page depicts that vision. Words and image together allow our inward eyes to see what John saw "in the Spirit" (cf. Rev 1,10; 4,2).

Arranging a corner for prayer in one's room, with the Bible, an icon and a candle, and stopping there for a few moments each day can be a way of discovering the meaning of these words from a psalm: "I keep the Lord ever in my sight" (Ps 16,8).



abolish his humanity, his life, his death, his compassion. "You have had a clear picture of Jesus Christ crucified, right before your eyes!" (Gal 3,1). The icon of Christ reminds us that the Risen Lord still has the face of a human being. Not an ideal human being, or humanity in general, but the real man Jesus of Nazareth, born of Mary, who wept when his friend Lazarus died and who was crucified under Pontius Pi-



*Is it always possible  
to forgive?*

*Does not forgiving run the risk of  
tolerating or justifying evil?*

At the heart of the Good News of Jesus Christ we find the proclamation of forgiveness. By sending his Son to us, God made a new beginning possible for those who were immobilized by the burden of their faults: "Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his Name" (Acts 10,43). And when this forgiveness is accepted, it changes something in our life; it becomes real above all in our readiness to forgive others. In the steps of Christ, Saint Paul underscores the link between God's forgiveness and the way we behave towards others: "Just as the Lord has forgiven you, do the same yourselves" (Col 3,13; cf. Eph 4,32; John 13,34; Matt 18,23-35). Jesus encourages us even to go beyond what is humanly reasonable, forgiving "not just seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matt 18,22).

And yet it is not rare to hear someone who has been wounded, especially by people close to them (cf. Ps 55,12-14), say, "I know that I have to forgive, but I'm not able to. Does that mean I am excluded from God's forgiveness?"

Although forgiveness is an essential dimension of life with Christ, it is not completely at the disposition of human beings. In the Hebrew Scriptures mercy, the ability to respond to evil with good, is precisely what characterizes God and distinguishes God from us: "My ways are not your ways" (Isa 55,6-9). Jesus too takes up this way of looking at things. In the Sermon on the Mount he distinguishes two types of behaviour, that of people in general, which

People sometimes do confuse forgiveness with a denial of the evil committed, as if in forgiving someone we were saying that what was done to us was not really all that bad. In reality, where there is no wrong conduct, there is strictly speaking no forgiveness either. Those who forgive recognize the evil done but do not get stuck there. They look beyond the present situation, counting on the possibility of a new beginning.

Jesus did not claim that those who committed misdeeds were innocent. Instead of focusing on their wrongdoing, however, he went further, pointing out unexpected new possibilities. He said to a woman caught in adultery, "I do not condemn you. Go, and from now on sin no more" (John 8,11). To one tax-collector he said, "Follow me" (Matt 9,9) and to another: "I must stay at your house today" (Luke 19,5). The love that forgives refuses to identify the evil with the person who committed it; that person remains worthy of love and capable of changing their life. And often, such a love that hopes all things makes a new life possible in the one who experiences it. Who else but Jesus would have seen in Matthew someone able to be one of his closest friends? Who would have dared to make him such an offer? And Jesus' invitation opens a new way forward for Matthew, enabling him to change completely his way of life. Similarly, instead of accusing or blaming Zacchaeus, Jesus simply tells him how much he desires a relationship with him. And that is enough to spark an unheard-of generosity in the tax-collector: "I will give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have de-

## *Two Questions About Forgiveness*

consists in loving those who love us, and that of our Father in heaven, which consists in loving all without exception, even those who do not love us in return.

What is new in the Gospel is that, through Christ, God's way of life becomes accessible to us. Henceforth we can and should be true sons and daughters of God, perfect in loving (cf. Matt 5,38-48). That is God's miracle in our lives, the consequence of the gift of his Spirit who transforms our hearts of stone into hearts of flesh (cf. Ezek 36,26-27).

Thus forgiveness, far from being merely another human activity, is the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in us. What we can do is to ask constantly for this gift and not set up obstacles to its operation in our lives. If, in spite of our human impossibilities, due to many factors over which our will has little control, the desire not to close the door to a new beginning in a relationship with someone remains alive in us, God will see to it that forgiveness opens a way forward. The day will come when we realize that a situation which seemed frozen has been transfigured, in all likelihood without our knowing exactly how this came about.

frauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much" (Luke 19,8). Despite what we so often prefer to believe, harshness or punishments are not the best remedy for evil. By our refusal to forgive, so often all we do is imprison another person in their inauthentic behaviour.

Forgiveness does not downplay evil, nor does it give another person free rein to keep on hurting us. Those who turn the other cheek (Matt 5,39) are not perpetual victims, but rather people who count on the power of love to dissolve the very roots of evil. Their paradoxical behaviour is an attempt to make people think about their conduct and to break out of the spiral of violence. The meekness of the Gospel is far different from naive sentimentality or an unhealthy abnegation; it implies a robust and lucid trust in the God of mercy whose weakness is stronger than what human beings call strength (1 Cor 1,25). Those who live out forgiveness do not refuse to look evil in the face; they do not excuse destructive acts. But they never shut their hearts to hope. They always wish to be ready to see in another person someone who is capable, at the right moment, of welcoming the God who always comes to make a new beginning possible, overturning all our human calculations.



These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference slightly longer passage.

**4 SUN** Jesus said: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**5 Mon** Moses told the people: What I command you today is not too difficult for you nor beyond your reach. The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice.

**6 Tue** The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim freedom to those in captivity.

**7 Wed** After being tempted in the desert, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God. "The time has come," he said, "the kingdom of God is at hand. Turn to God and believe in the good news of the Gospel."

**1 Thu** The Lord says to his people: Look and see the joy that is coming to you from God.

**2 Fri** Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: I am no longer in the world; they are in the world and I am coming to you, Holy Father. Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one.

**3 Sat** St THOMAS Risen from the dead, Jesus said to Thomas who doubted, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

**11 SUN** In a parable, Jesus said: The seed which was sown in good soil is like someone who hears the Word and understands it; that person bears fruit.

**12 Mon** I waited, I waited for the Lord, and he heard my cry. He put a fresh song in my mouth: a hymn of praise to our God.

**13 Tue** St Paul writes: Let us stop judging one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any obstacle in the way of another.

**14 Wed** In the day, God sends his faithful love, and even at night the song it inspires in me is a prayer to the God of my life.

**15 Thu** Let us not become tired of doing good. The harvest will come in good time if we persevere.

**16 Fri** While we live, as when we die, we belong to the Lord. For Christ died and returned to life that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

**17 Sat** Jesus said: Whoever does God's will is a brother, a sister and a mother to me.

**18 SUN** Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which someone took and sowed in their field. Of all seeds it is the smallest, yet once it has grown it is the biggest of plants.

**19 Mon** Days will come when many peoples will come and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, so that he may teach us his ways." And they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into bill-hooks.

**20 Tue** There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.

**21 Wed** Moses said to the people: Do not be afraid! Stand firm and you will see what God will do to save you today.

**22 Thu** The plans I have for you, says the Lord, are plans not for disaster but for peace, to give you a future and a hope.

**23 Fri** If you break unjust chains to let the oppressed go free, if you share your food with the hungry and shelter the homeless, then your light will break forth like the dawn and your wound will be quickly healed.

**24 Sat** Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**25 SUN** Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like a trader looking for precious pearls, who on finding one of great value, goes, sells everything he has and buys it.

**26 Mon** In my distress, I called to the Lord. God heard me and set me free.

**27 Tue** God chose things that by human standards are weak to confound the strong. God chose what is lowly and despised in the eyes of the world.

**28 Wed** Seek the Lord while he is near. Turn to our God, who pardons freely.

**29 Thu** The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in time of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, Lord. For you never forsake those who seek you.

**30 Fri** God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we are in communion with one another.

**31 Sat** Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. You must set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his.

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JULY

MEDITATING ON THE WORD



**1 SUN** Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, who gave them to the people. They all ate and were satisfied.

Mt 14:13-21

**2 Mon** The Lord says: I will give an undivided heart to my people. I will put a new spirit in them.

Ezk 11:17-20

**3 Tue** Daniel prayed saying: Listen to the prayer of your servant. For we rely not on our good deeds but on your great mercy.

Dn 9:18-19

**4 Wed** All the believers held everything in common. They sold their goods and possessions and shared the proceeds according to the needs of each person.

Ac 2:42-47

**5 Thu** In all things God works for the good of those who love him and who have been called according to his purpose.

Rm 8:28-30

**6 Fri** TRANSFIGURATION On the mountain where Jesus was transfigured, a bright cloud covered the disciples and a voice said: This is my beloved Son, on whom my favour rests; listen to him.

Mt 17:1-8

**7 Sat** Jesus said: I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

Jn 10:11-15

**8 SUN** Jesus came towards his disciples, walking on the water, and they were terrified; but at once he said to them: Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.

Mt 14:22-33

**9 Mon** Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

Lk 17:20-21

**10 Tue** Rest in God alone, my soul! He is the source of my hope.

Ps 62

**11 Wed** Jesus said: Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Be on the watch and pray at all times.

Lk 21:25-36

**12 Thu** When I say, "I am slipping," your faithful love, Lord, supports me.

Ps 94:14-22

**13 Fri** The Lord said to Jeremiah: Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and consecrated you.

Jr 1:4-8

**14 Sat** May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May God confirm your hearts.

1 Th 3:12-13

**15 SUN** THE VIRGIN MARY said: The Lord's merciful love stretches from age to age upon those who revere him.

Lk 1:39-56

**16 Mon** The Lord says to his people: Return to me, for I am merciful.

Jr 3:12

**17 Tue** Lord, you look upon the humble. Though I live surrounded by trouble, you give me life.

Ps 138

**18 Wed** Be generous, for you know the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ who became poor for your sake.

2 Co 8:7-15

**19 Thu** God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life.

Ws 1:11-15

**20 Fri** Someone said to Jesus: I believe! Help my lack of faith.

Mk 9:17-29

**21 Sat** John the Baptist said to the people: Anyone who has two tunics must share with whoever has none. And anyone with something to eat must do the same.

Lk 3:10-18

**22 SUN** Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by any human, but by my Father in heaven."

Mt 16:13-20

**23 Mon** Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

1 Th 5:12-22

**24 Tue** Who among you reveres the Lord? Who among you walks in darkness and sees no light? Trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon your God.

Is 50:10

**25 Wed** Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may revere you.

Ps 86

**26 Thu** Jesus said: Seek first God's kingdom and his justice, and all the other things will be given you in addition.

Mt 6:25-34

**27 Fri** Jesus said to a rich young man: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

Mt 19:16-22

**28 Sat** Do not repay one wrong with another. Seek peace and pursue it.

1 P 3:8-12

**29 SUN** Jesus said: Whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Mt 16:21-27

**30 Mon** May God enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see the hope to which he calls you.

Ep 1:15-23

**31 Tue** James writes: Do not only listen to the Word, put it into practice.

Jm 1:22-25

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# AUGUST

# MEDITATING ON THE WORD



Jesus knows the human heart. He knew that his death on the cross would be a scandal for his disciples. That is why, before giving his life, he asked his Father to give them "another Paraclete," in other words a helper, a support. The first meaning of this word comes from the law-courts; it refers to the attorney who stood beside the person accused of a crime.

How is the Holy Spirit a defender, a support, a comforter? If Jesus says he will ask the Father for "another Paraclete," that is because he sees himself as the first support. To understand how the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, we must therefore look first to see how Jesus supported and comforted his companions. The Holy Spirit is for us what Jesus was for his disciples and for those who met him.

For the evangelist John, the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of truth. Since God is beyond our human understanding, we need help to see "the whole truth." The Holy Spirit will help us to understand first the truth about God, who loves each of us without exception, and then the truth about Jesus, the Son of God who makes God's love accessible to us by giving his life on a cross. Then the cross no longer appears as a failure or an absurdity (cf. 1 Cor 1,18-25), but the revelation of the mystery of God's love.

The Spirit of truth will also teach us the truth about ourselves. Sometimes, the voices that accuse us are not voices from the outside, but those by which we accuse ourselves. We see our weak points and that leads us to doubt and discouragement. The Holy Spirit comes to help us understand that even if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows everything (1 John 3,20). The Holy Spirit comforts us by attesting that, in spite of our human frailties, we are still children of God (cf. Rom 8,16). Our deepest identity can only be understood in the light of God's love.

- Where can I find support, comfort, encouragement?
- To better understand the role of the Holy Spirit we must look at the life of Jesus. What Gospel story helps me to understand how God comforts us?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Like Thomas, we were not present when Jesus, risen from the dead, came back to his disciples. Like Thomas, often we would like to see and touch before believing.

Jesus does not love us any the less because of our difficulty in believing. He comes again. As he did for his disciples, and especially for Thomas, he comes to us to join us in our fears and in our lack of faith.

What is striking about the Risen Christ is the simplicity of his being. We could have imagined that, as the Risen Lord, he would come with majesty and power. On the contrary, he is recognized by these simple words: "Peace be with you" (v. 26). The Biblical word for peace, *shalom*, means much more than the absence of conflict. It is God's blessing that gives the fullness of life.

Believing in God means opening ourselves to an unexpected presence: "Do not be unbelieving but become a person of faith" (v. 27). Yes, happy are those who trust without having seen; they receive the fullness of life. As Saint Peter will write later, "Without having seen him, you love him; although you still do not see him, you believe in him and are filled with a joy too deep for words..." (1 Peter 1,8).

- Jesus said to Thomas, "Do not be unbelieving but become a person of faith." What do these words mean to me?
- When I am faced with an unknown situation and could be paralyzed by it, what helps me to go beyond fear and to continue on the road of trust?
- What does Christ's last beatitude in John's Gospel mean to me: "Happy those who believe without having seen"?

## A LETTER FROM CARDINAL MARTINI

# What I Would Like to See in our Church

Cardinal Martini, the archbishop of Milan, wrote a letter to the Christians of his city entitled "Another Milan after Taizé." He reflected on what the experience of the young adult European meeting could mean for those who participated. His question, "What would I like to see remain of all this in the day-to-day life of our Church?", can be asked by all those who would like to keep on living out what they experienced intensely for several days in Milan.

Dear Friends,

(...) We lived a time of great hospitality and openness. This saw the involvement of many individuals and families, sometimes even of people not so present in our pastoral initiatives; it gave tangible evidence of how young people, adults and the elderly can work together; it fostered a concrete experience of sharing

and brotherhood between a great variety of different persons who previously were unacquainted. We experienced and shared, in the second place, long and intense times of prayer, of silence, of listening to the Word in individual parishes and in the large halls of the Fiera; many remained amazed by this and we have discovered once again that it is possible

to pray, to be silent, to meditate, to sing, even today, even in a large assembly, even in a city and in a society like ours, secularized and complex. We rediscovered and communicated, with simplicity but with truth, some "signs of hope" present in our communities: beginning with the vitality, at times hidden and perhaps somewhat undervalued, of our parishes,



and then continuing with different experiences of educative, caritative and social involvement.

If this is what we experienced, what would I like to see remain of all this in the day-to-day life of our Church? I would like to point out to you some features of that face of the Church which we have already treated several times in the past few years and which, in the light of this experience, can be rediscovered and proposed once more with new vigor and new conviction.

I would like to see our Church—and in it every parish community, the different associations, individual families—be and become more and more a *welcoming Church*, the true home of all, where no one feels excluded. (...) It is above all in the ordinariness and the concreteness of the life of each day, each month and each year that this welcome can and should be shown to every woman and every man, for those most in need, faced with old and new forms of poverty, with respect to those who come to us from other countries, cultures, races, religions, surpassing all forms of self-centered narrow-mindedness and opening ourselves to solidarity towards the weakest and most forgotten. I would like to see, in other words, that our Church—as happened during these days—be able to open itself more and more to welcoming others and be ready and willing to let itself be disturbed and even called into question by the urgency of charity and of communion. Only in this way will it be a fount of that life and that joy which come from the Spirit of God, will it be able to reveal God as father and mother and be a sign and a stimulus for the whole of society to rediscover the greatness of its civilization, measuring it also on the basis



of its capacity for welcome and for sharing.

I would like to see a *Church which is a true place of communion and brotherhood*, in which people are able to rediscover a taste for "being together," highlighting and promoting the original uniqueness of each person. (...) In particular, I would like to see mature and develop (...) a warmer relationship and a greater collaboration both among different generations—young people, adults, the elderly—as well as among groups, associations and movements, and among pastoral agencies and structures. Along the same lines, I would like to see our parishes—appealing to and taking the cue from what happened, sometimes to the surprise of the very persons involved, during the welcome of the young people who came for the meeting promoted by the brothers of Taizé—exploit and promote the availability and the presence of persons and families, at times unknown or indifferent to one another, who have journeyed together for a time or who can be invited to do so.

I would like to see, in addition, a *Church that prays, that remains in silent adoration before God and that listens to his Word* and that is able to live in this way as a people. It is a matter of growing in this "popular holiness" to which I have referred on several occasions in past years, rediscovering the joy and the courage to try every way possible to proclaim, within the secular city, the priority of God, the desire of the Absolute, the necessity for listening to a Word which does not come from us, but descends as a pure and merciful gift from the heart of God. And all of this through moments of pausing, of silence, of meditative listening, of choral supplication. (...) Personal, family and community prayer as well—which, on certain occasions, at times and for those who wish, could also make use of the songs and the rhythms typical of the "prayer of Taizé"—should be the

daily nourishment and almost the indispensable respiration of our life: a prayer with numerous forms of the most varied sort, not just intellectual but able to involve as well the senses and the eyes, attracted by the beauty of a God who are never tired of listening to and of repeating the words of salvation and consolation; a prayer accessible to all that can make use of simple forms, new or traditional, repetitive and mnemonic.

I would like to see, finally, a *Church that knows how to share and communicate the hope* that the Holy Spirit continues to awaken in its bosom. There are "signs of hope" in our midst because the Spirit of God is present and at work, arriving before us, working more than us and better than us. It is important to recognize them. (...) These signs come through trust in others and the readiness to open the doors of our homes and our hearts to them. These realities at times are hidden, dormant or even denied, but they are present in many of us, in many families in our communities; they need to be recognized and kept alive, in the certainty that they constitute the first and basic patrimony that we have to share with others, opening the hearts of all to trust and hope.

If these and other fruits remain and ripen, we too will find ways of rooting in God, the Father of all, that trust and that hope witnessed during the meeting in the past few days and which are needed and longed for by our city, our countries, our Europe.

## Joy on Earth

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This brand new recording is intended for people in English-speaking countries who want to listen to the songs in their own language, as well as for those who are looking for songs adapted to an English-speaking assembly. The first part of the recording presents an evening prayer in Taizé. The second part contains some more recent songs, including several that are intended specifically for the celebration of the Eucharist.

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